

Anatoly Molotkov— Five Poems



Feature Poet

The Other

I walk to the market wearing
a head scarf. I'm less

seen than darkness, less
heard than death. I

wear women's garb to feel
what it means

to not exist. Religious
police would be shocked

by my beard hidden by
the black

fabric.

The Arrest

The soldier
 caught her
 with a sack
 of rice
 close
to her chest

It rests in her arms
 on the red grass

the way one holds
 a baby.

with flies
 exploring
 the bullet hole.

On Time and Anger

Time bends the meadow. The grasp of your control, close.
You taunt me,
puzzle me, wait for me in my mind. You preside over me.
I listen
for your blind spots, watch your calendar evade itself. Our life is fake,
a promise
without intention. I'm so used to my anger I'm bent without it. I need it more than

I need you.

Unreincarnatable

Which
 door is open and which
door is open and which
 door is shut and which
mirror will show my way and which
 door leads to heaven and which
door will save me from heaven's
 deathly grasp? Which key in which
hand in which mirror and which
 keyhole in which order in which
order and which pair of wings will
 burn first? No eating or drinking or
talking or happy returns or
 falling apart at the seams or
drinking or licking the seams raw or
 shaking or shaking the angels'
hands. In which
 keyhole am I? No unnecessary
questions or questions or queries, just
 facts and opinions and sagging
skin. Which mirror will
 show my face or the key or
the ash of my wings or
 my soul or my soul or my
stale body?

Medical History

As the hospital hummed its steady
buzz of dying, I advised
the patients, “You must rest, take

your pills, worry less on your path, so
far off course. How much
can you learn before the clock

strikes? You must treat your cure
seriously, invest in your body’s
nourishment, your soul’s

diet.” As I wondered how else
to help, a pinprick on my arm
distracted me. *This injection will*

help you sleep, a lady in white
said. *The doctor will*
see you in

the morning.

A. Molotkov’s poetry collections are *The Catalog of Broken Things*, *Application of Shadows*, *Synonyms for Silence* and *Future Symptoms* (forthcoming from The World Works). His memoir *A Broken Russia Inside Me* about growing up in the USSR and making a new life in America is due out in 2022 from Propertius. Molotkov’s collection of ten short stories, *Interventions in Blood* is part of Hawai‘i Review Issue 91. He co-edits The Inflectionist Review. Please visit him at AMolotkov.com